

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

LONG-TERM CARE VETERANS CHOICE ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7158, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts and agreements for the payment of care in non-Department of Veterans Affairs medical foster homes for certain veterans who are unable to live independently.

Medical foster homes are private homes where a trained caregiver provides services to a few individuals. These facilities serve as an alternative to nursing homes, providing residents with the comfort of home with medical attention readily available.

Medical foster homes and caregivers must meet specific criteria to ensure that veterans receive the same level of care that would be provided in traditional Veterans Affairs facilities or nursing homes.

Caregivers must demonstrate the ability to provide care and supervision 24/7, communicate significant changes in a veteran's status, and have caregiving experience, along with other requirements.

The home where a veteran would be living must go through inspection with a VA multi-disciplinary team, provide a home-like environment, meet National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Life Safety Code, and more.

The medical foster care program started in 2008 and has served over 1,000 veterans nationally. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the demand for medical foster homes is highest in rural areas, where veterans want to stay in the communities in which they are comfortable.

The Department of Veterans Affairs says that the home environment enriches the lives of veterans and their caregivers. Veterans who live in this type of setting tend to have fewer hospitalizations than those in institutional care or who live alone.

This program is providing our nation's veterans with a sense of belonging and community while also providing them with the medical care they need. Many veterans that are in medical foster homes report feeling like they are part of a family and supported.

It is estimated that there are 46,000 veterans in nursing homes across the country. Nursing homes do provide patients with the medical attention they need, but many patients miss the aspect of living in their community, in a home, and with family.

This bill would provide veterans from my home of Houston, Texas with the option to stay in their communities and be part of a family while receiving 24/7 care. Instead of stripping these veterans from their commu-

nities this bill will provide them with a way to be better engrained in their communities.

The Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act would provide veterans who want to be at home with the ability to seek care that provides that level of support and familiarity.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 7158, Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act. With the passage of this bill, we can give a sense of family back to many veterans who have been longing for a sense of normalcy.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF MAYOR RICK BONILLA ON THE CITY COUNCIL OF SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 5, 2022

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize my friend and colleague Mayor Rick Bonilla as his service on the San Mateo City Council comes to a close. Rick's record of accomplishment is impressive.

Rick and his wife Suzanne first moved to San Mateo in 1991. From 1998 to 2011, he was employed as a Field Representative by the Northern California Carpenters Regional Council. His time in public service began in 2001 when he was appointed to the Bay Meadows and Transportation Corridor Citizen's Advisory Committee. Bay Meadows was the largest redevelopment project in modern San Mateo history, and it was key to revitalizing the old site of Bay Meadows Racetrack. Rick offered his vision for land use and transportation, helping to shape the development into today's hub of high-tech industry, housing, local commerce, and recreation.

In 2006, he was appointed to the San Mateo Public Works Commission where he served for six years. He was then appointed to the Planning Commission where he served until 2015 when he was appointed to the San Mateo City Council. He was elected to his full term in 2017.

Rick Bonilla has embraced his public duties with vigor. For many years, he served as the council's representative on the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG, General Assembly). At ABAG, Rick sat on the all-important Regional Planning Committee. This committee established the methodology for determining each city's required housing allocation throughout the nine county San Francisco Bay Area. The numbers that arise from this methodology profoundly influence the cost of living for millions of Bay Area residents. Rick is a very strong advocate for housing, and also sits on the board of the Housing Endowment and Regional Trust (HEART).

Peninsula Clean Energy is our local government agency responsible for buying electricity

for nearly all businesses and residences in San Mateo County. Rick was instrumental in forming this agency and sits on its board. The agency is at the center of greening San Mateo County by offering rebates across many items that can be electrified, including vehicles and appliances, and by offering clean electricity at a price below that offered by our local public utility.

Rick also represents the council on the San Mateo County Council of Cities, the San Mateo-Foster City Public Financing Agency, and is a board member and Vice Chair of the South Bayside Waste Management Authority. He sits on the Congestion Management and Environmental Quality subcommittee of the City/County Association of Governments, and on a subcommittee of the League of California Cities. He is also responsible for four internal council committee appointments and is the chief representative to my office from the San Mateo City Council.

Now that I've listed Rick's committee assignments, let me take a few moments to speak about Rick Bonilla, the person. He is deeply dedicated to economic opportunity for all persons. Over the years, my staff and I have had countless conversations with Rick about opportunities for high school students to join the skilled trades, the need to build enough housing so that broad segments of the population could afford to live in San Mateo, racial justice, and the need to protect and promote democracy. Rick would regularly attend my town halls and illustrate for the public the connection between local decisions and national issues, providing insights that attendees would not otherwise receive. He also participated as a guest during one of my telephone town halls.

Social justice is a particular passion for Rick. He is also dedicated to promoting public safety and ensuring that residents feel safe when interacting with the San Mateo Police Department.

As he leaves the city council, Mayor Bonilla has a lot of accomplishments of which he may be proud. On all major issues impacting San Mateo for nearly two decades, he's played a role in creating the prosperous future that emerged from those choices. Whether it was Bay Meadows, bicycle paths, the minimum wage or investments in parks, police and the environment, Rick always asked whether the decision made that night would withstand the test of time. He is thus a remarkable leader, dedicated not only to those who currently live in San Mateo but to generations yet to come.

I wish Rick Bonilla well in the years ahead. I know that his wife, retired special education teacher Suzanne Flecker, will want to get him out of their house because the man really has a lot of energy. I therefore look forward to seeing Rick around the Peninsula as he goes to public meetings, continues his volunteer work, and impacts San Mateo's civic life for years to come.

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